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General Debate 3 (a): Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels

3 (b): Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration

Statement submitted by Statement Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries, International Planned Parenthood Federation (Africa Region), Stichting dance4life, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council[2]

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1] E/CN.9/2018/1.
[2] The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries, International Planned Parenthood Federation (Africa region), Stichting dance4life, Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN), and Stichting Rutgers — all organizations with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council — as well as CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, welcome the theme of the fifty-first session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development (CPD) on "Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration". In light of this year's CPD theme, the organization would like to draw particular attention to the impact that urbanization, urban poverty and international migration has on the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights of adolescents and youth.

Adolescents and youth in sustainable cities

Across the world, the population and particularly adolescents and youth become increasingly urbanized. Youth under 18 years old are projected to make up to 60 per cent of urban population by 2030, especially in low-income countries. They are overrepresented in the urban poverty rates, and are exposed to vulnerabilities such as living in informal settlements (slums), working in informal, unregulated and unsafe conditions, or being unemployed, being exposed to poor quality and overcrowded housing, risk of forceful eviction, lack of safe, reliable water supplies, poor provision of sanitation, drainage, sewage and solid waste collection, pollution, lack of access to health services and education, high rates of crime and violence, and high risk of natural disasters such as floods and landslides.

Health indicators, including on sexual and reproductive health, reflect young people's vulnerabilities, with stark inequalities between those living in more affluent urban areas and those living in informal settlements and impoverished conditions. The number of adolescent pregnancies and unsafe abortions, and STI/HIV infection rates are high among the young urban poor, as these youth lack access to comprehensive sexuality education, modern contraceptives and affordable, quality and confidential youth-friendly health services. Although service delivery should be relatively easier in an urban setting, in practice we see that the urban poor face significant social, cultural, economic and legal barriers in access. In addition, as informal urban settlements are often characterized by high crime rates, particularly adolescent girls are exposed to high risks of sexual and gender-based violence which generally remain unpunished.

Urban youth in Nairobi, Kenya

The above-described challenges are very real for instance for urban youth in Nairobi's slums. Civil society organizations have come up with creative solutions to reach young people with information and services, to overcome some of the barriers. For instance, radio stations which are accessible and affordable to young people either through mobile phones or portable radios, are used to share critical information on sexual and reproductive health and rights issues. Trained champions and youth advocates host talk shows in "Sheng", Nairobi urban youth language, where adolescents and youth discuss their experiences in seeking services and information, and can dial in to ask questions about the challenges they face. The radio talk shows are followed up with community forums in social halls in urban slums.

In addition, young people could receive answers to their questions about their sexual and reproductive health through a free short message service (sms), and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

Recommendations:

1. Invest in social and economic empowerment and development programmes in slum areas, targeting young people and adolescents to improve their access to quality housing, health services, education and decent work.

2. Invest in overcoming the social, cultural, economic and legal barriers for urban youth to access:

a. Information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including comprehensive sexuality education, both in and out of school settings;

b. Youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, including a full range of modern contraceptives, emergency contraceptives, safe abortion services and post-abortion care, and maternal health services.

3. Invest in the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence in urban settings, as well as the improved access to justice, and legal and social counselling.

4. Ensure the full involvement and meaningful participation of diverse groups of youth in urban development programs and policies, as well as education and service delivery.

Adolescent and youth international migration

A large share of the world's international migrants are constituted by adolescents and youth, with a particular peak among youth in their twenties. Youth migrate for a variety of reasons: from looking for better education prospects and income generating opportunities, to family reunification, as well as to escape the effects of violence, war and conflict. Youth forced migration and displacement, be it within a country or across borders, is driven by various interacting reasons. Climate change is a threat multiplier: contributing to economic and political instability, propelling sudden-onset disasters like floods and storms but also slow-onset disasters like drought and desertification contributing to crop failure and famines. Those crises inflame political unrest and worsen the impacts of war, leading to even more displacement.

Although the opportunities for youth and the country of their destination can be significant, it is important to also recognize the challenges, vulnerabilities and human rights' violations that young international migrants experience. These positive and negative effects are gendered — whereby migration can contribute to women's and girls' emancipation, for instance, when adolescent girls migrate to escape pressure to marry or to pursue a level of economic independence, but also aggravate the risks, vulnerabilities and rights abuses faced by young women such as exposure to sexual violence.

Evidence shows that the majority of victims of trafficking are young women between 14 and 17 years of age. They are overrepresented in the least regulated and most unsafe segments of the labour market, as they migrate as agricultural workers, domestic workers, sex workers, "entertainers" or other occupations with poor working conditions; low remuneration, long working hours and few legal protections. Hence, the general protections that are there often fail to reach young migrant women, and tailored efforts are needed to protect them from human rights violations.

In addition, young international migrants often face restrictions in their access to the job market, education and health services, including sexual and reproductive health rights, as a result of laws, policies and practices such as discrimination and xenophobia in the countries of transit and destination. Undocumented adolescent and young migrants face such restrictions and more as they may be put in detention from

the age of 18 when legally they are considered adults and lose the protections that being a child entail. As migrants often fall outside the general education and health structures in the country of transit and destination, they fail to get the sexual and reproductive health information they need to make informed choices. They also lack access to contraceptives, safe abortion services and post abortion care, and maternal health services.

Recommendations:

1. Invest in the consistent collection, analysis and use of data on human mobility including migration, disaggregated by age and sex, among other factors. Such data is key to understand the mobility and migration phenomena and what kind of characteristics these young people have. These insights of the data analytics help governments as well as civil society to improve policies and programmes that are in line with the needs of young people and ensure their human rights are being respected, protected and fulfilled throughout their journey.

2. Review, adopt and implement rights-based, age and gender-responsive migration regulations, policies and programs, including to ensure young migrants' access to sexual and reproductive health information, education and services. These policies must comprehensively address conditions, risks and vulnerabilities of young migrants, taking into account their resilience and adaptability.

3. Ensure the meaningful participation of young migrants in their transit and destination communities, and in the formulation, review and implementation of policies and programs that aim to protect their rights and stimulate their integration.